

Approaches to Language Variation: Goals and Objectives of the Spanish Heritage Language Syllabus

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, teaching standard Spanish has been at the center of Spanish as a heritage language (SHL) instruction (Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández-Chávez, 2003; Hidalgo, 1990, 1997; Leeman, 2005; Martínez, 2003; Valdés, 1978, 1997; Villa 1996, 2002). A growing number of SHL scholars, however, have advocated for shifting the focus of instruction to the students' language varieties and to dialect awareness (Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández-Chávez, 2003; Leeman, 2005; Villa, 2000). In the fall of 2011, a total of 62 SHL syllabi were collected from four-year public and private universities located in 15 different U.S. states. A content analysis of the course goals and objectives was employed to determine the approach to language variation that each course adopted (eradication, expansion, appreciation, appropriateness-based, or critical). In order to establish reliability, two coders independently categorized the course goals and objectives in all syllabi, obtaining an acceptable inter-rater agreement level. Findings show that earlier eradication approaches have almost disappeared while appreciation approaches are gaining popularity. Other more recent approaches have been adopted in only a small number of syllabi. The results corroborate prior research showing that the teaching of the standard continues to be a central goal in SHL education (Valdés et al., 2006). In addition, SHL courses have been slow to adopt sociolinguistically rich practices.

KEYWORDS: *language variation, Spanish, syllabus, dialect awareness, curriculum design, SHL pedagogy*

INTRODUCTION

The number of Spanish heritage language (SHL) programs, especially at post-secondary institutions, is increasing rapidly all across the United States. In fact, the availability of SHL programs has at least doubled in the last decade and can be expected to continue to grow steadily in the coming years (Beaudrie, 2012). Now that programs are multiplying, an important question in SHL curriculum development and instruction is, What are these courses teaching SHL learners?

In a study of SHL programs in California, Valdés and colleagues (2006) found that these programs' primary focus was to develop the students' proficiency in standard Spanish. These findings raise concerns about a possible disconnect between SHL research and SHL instructional practices. As Martínez (2003) accurately pointed out over a decade ago, the issues of linguistic variation and dialect awareness are extremely important in HL pedagogy. SHL researchers agree that one of the goals of SHL instruction is to expand the students' linguistic repertoires to include an academic variety of Spanish because of its instrumental value (Carreira, 2000). However, several researchers have contested the notion of 'standard Spanish' (Villa, 1996, 2000), the imposition of a foreign, monolingual variety of Spanish for U.S. Spanish speakers (Leeman,

2005; Martínez, 2003), and the teaching of the standard as the central goal of SHL education (Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández-Chávez, 2003; Leeman, 2005; Villa, 2000). Ever since Valdés denounced the widespread use of the eradication approach present in SHL classrooms in the 1980s, several proposals have been put forward, which are based on expansion, appreciation, appropriateness-based, and critical approaches.

The present study seeks to investigate this issue further by examining current SHL syllabi from courses taught around the United States. The main purpose is to examine the approach toward language these courses have adopted in their objectives and goals, and to identify their treatment of language variation. As Leeman (2012) notes, “curricular design necessarily involves ideologies about what constitutes language (e.g., a collection of discrete grammar points vs. a sociocultural system of communication), what kind of Spanish is worth knowing, and the relative importance of linguistic, metalinguistic and cultural knowledge, among other issues.” (p. 52). This study seeks to determine how current curricular practices in SHL instruction align with SHL academic scholarship regarding these issues. To this effect, the following section provides an overview of the extant literature regarding SHL programs and course offerings and the treatment of language variation in SHL.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Approaches to Language Variation

The teaching of standard Spanish has been at the center of SHL instruction since its early days (Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández-Chávez, 2003; Hidalgo, 1990, 1997; Leeman, 2005; Martínez 2003; Valdés, 1978, 1997; Villa 1996, 2002). As speakers of a minority language, SHL learners in the United States come to the classroom with little familiarity with academic registers of Spanish, and the majority are speakers of non-prestige varieties of Spanish (Leeman, 2005). SHL educators have long considered that their main task is to help their students acquire more formal registers and the so-called prestigious, or standard, variety of Spanish.¹ However, both the notion of the standard and the goal of standard acquisition have been questioned by various scholars in the field of SHL.

In 1981, Valdés was the first to draw the academic community’s attention to the widespread *eradication* approach in use in SHL courses of the time and present a coherent argument rejecting it. This approach treats the varieties that students speak as impure forms of Spanish that have been contaminated from contact with English and are therefore inferior and deserving of stigmatization (Valdés, 1981; Villa, 1996). The goal of eradication-oriented instruction is to teach students ‘standard Spanish’ and eliminate any linguistic traces of the nonstandard varieties. In subsequent years, the use of this approach in the classroom has generated significant debate. The teachers who advocate for the standard variety of Spanish argue that mastering it is key to students’ future economic success (Villa, 1996) and academic achievement (Aparicio, 1993). Although few would deny these advantages, other equally valid arguments against this approach have been put forward. The main arguments have been that teaching the standard is in itself problematic because the so-called standard is an abstract myth (Lippi-Green, 1997; Villa, 1996). Moreover, asking students to adopt a prestige form may send the underlying message that their variety of Spanish is inferior, and so are they (Martínez, 2003). This message can have negative consequences for SHL maintenance, since students’ home language variety is crucial to

successful, natural communication with their families and communities, which are central elements in promoting language maintenance (Villa, 1996). According to Hidalgo (1990), imposing the standard and disregarding learners' varieties is "more academically, economically, and psychologically detrimental than beneficial" (p. 113). As Bernal-Henríquez and Hernández-Chávez (2003) point out, this approach undermines learners' self-confidence, which deters their use of the heritage language and threatens its maintenance.

Recent research has called into question the dichotomous division between standard and nonstandard varieties of language in relation to SHL learner competence. Scholars have questioned the presupposition that seems to be taken for granted in many SHL classrooms: namely, that SHL students do not possess a standard register and do possess an informal one. In truth, many SHL students do possess a degree of fluency in a standard variety of the language. As Lynch (2012, p. 85) points out, many SHL researchers and pedagogues alike believe that "heritage speakers are 'deficient' in formal styles of language yet 'proficient' in informal styles, when in reality they are also 'deficient' in informal styles in some respects . . . and 'proficient' in formal styles by some measures." The need to deconstruct these artificial dichotomies and use actual student language production as a starting point for deciding what to include in and exclude from our language teaching in the SHL classroom is a necessary next step in the continued improvement of the SHL classroom experience. This study aims at bringing current SHL practices to the foreground in an effort to explore the presence or absence of much-needed connections between SHL research and SHL practice.

To replace the eradication approach, some scholars have argued in favor of the 'biloquialism' approach, also known as the 'additive' or 'expansion' approach. This approach consists of adding a second dialect to the dialect students already know (Porras, 1997; Sánchez, 1981). Although it does not attempt to eliminate a student's home language variety, it promotes and legitimizes the standard language and existing societal norms for when and where to use the different varieties. This approach was evident in early SHL textbooks, such as Baker (1966 and 1972, as cited in Valdés, 1997), which focused almost exclusively on the teaching of the standard by using a contrastive approach with lists of prestige versus non-prestige language forms organized into categories of *se dice* and *no se dice*. More recently, scholars have criticized this approach for its overemphasis on the standard, which essentially serves to continue silencing home varieties by valuing the variety of Spanish that is required for academic purposes over varieties used for daily communication (Leeman, 2005).

The third approach cited in the literature is 'appreciation of dialect differences' (Valdés, 1981). This approach seeks to teach students about the naturalness of dialectal variation and the non-linguistic reasons behind the stigma attached to certain varieties. Leading scholars in the field have advocated for this approach (Carreira, 2000; Valdés, 1981). Importantly, it emphasizes the utility of all language varieties and stresses that speakers of all languages employ multiple registers or styles in a variety of contexts.

The fourth approach, as summarized by Leeman (2005), is the appropriateness-based approach. It proposes teaching students that all linguistic varieties are valid but some are more appropriate than others in certain contexts. Scholars such as Samaniego and Pino (2000), Gutiérrez (1997),

and Potowski (2005) have argued that students need to learn an appropriate language variety for each context. Leeman (2005) summarizes the problems with this approach by saying that it legitimizes and promotes the dominant position of standard varieties and simplifies the complex nature of language variation and power relations in society. It conveys the notion that all varieties are equal and that speakers share a common set of norms and a common evaluation of these norms. Importantly, it does not empower students to question these norms and exert their own agency in their own language use.

Finally, the most recent approach, proposed by Martínez (2003); Leeman (2005); Villa (2000); and Hernández-Chávez (2003), is called 'critical based dialect awareness,' or the 'critical approach' (following Martínez, 2003). This approach calls for not only developing dialectal appreciation and understanding of linguistic differences but also for making students aware of the social and political dimensions of language variation. This approach argues that students need to understand how language varieties may be valued or devalued for non-linguistic reasons that have to do with power relations between their speakers (Fairclough, 1992). Through this approach teachers will be able to equip their students with the sociolinguistic knowledge necessary to make appropriate linguistic choices based on their social awareness. In other words, students will be empowered to determine what language forms they want to speak, with whom, and why.

In light of the various approaches to language from SHL scholarship summarized above, this study seeks to determine how they align with current curricular practices in SHL instruction. The syllabus, which is the subpart of the curriculum that is concerned with the specification of what is taught in a course and the order in which it is to be taught (Turner, 1996), is the unit of analysis. However, as Razfar (2012) states, "the most important curricular questions that need to be asked are not only those related to content (what?), but also *how* learning is organized and mediated (Egan, 1978). This is precisely where the foregrounding of language and debates surrounding language use are of importance to curriculum inquiry" (p. 137). It is essential that we explore this connection in the SHL curriculum because issues of linguistic variation and dialect awareness are at the core of SHL instruction.

SHL Course Offerings

Studies on SHL programs have primarily focused on documenting the nature and availability of specially designed courses for SHL learners. In 2002, Ingold and colleagues (2002) found that out of 146 programs, only 17.8% of programs offered separate courses for SHL learners, and enrollment in these courses was often quite low. Some of the challenges in implementing SHL courses were inadequate program information, a lack of interest among students, and inadequate language-placement procedures. Among programs offering no SHL courses, the major obstacles to initiating this track were insufficient enrollment, lack of funding, and lack of trained instructors. Lack of interest from the administration, students, and faculty was also noted as an obstacle.

A decade later, Beaudrie (2012) undertook another nationwide survey with the primary aim of generating a current account of the number and types of programs offered for SHL learners in U.S. four-year universities.³ The study found a total of 169 SHL programs in the United States

(40%), which indicates a marked increase in the availability of courses. The Northeast had the highest percentage (50%) and the Mountain West the lowest (26%), while the remaining other regions displayed a fairly even distribution ranging from 31% to 38%. Most of the SHL programs, 85%, were concentrated in 10 states: California, New York, Texas, Illinois, Massachusetts, Florida, New Jersey, and Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New Mexico. Most programs offered a limited number of courses, ranging from only one (72, or 43%) or two (64, or 38%), to six SHL courses. There were only a few multi-course programs located in the Midwest and Southwest. Importantly, a considerable number of institutions reported plans for expanding the number of SHL courses, revamping existing offerings, or creating a course for SHL learners in the future.

More recently, (Carreira, 2014) reports on the findings of an online survey of higher education programs, a project of the National Heritage Language Resource Center. The survey was designed to address gaps in previous surveys in the areas of teacher training and background, proficiency levels of HL courses, and pedagogical materials. At the time of writing the article, 298 programs were part of the database with 76 for Spanish. A total of 61 programs, or 80.2%, offered special courses for SHL learners, which is considerably higher than what was reported in previous surveys. Given that results come from programs that accepted the invitation to participate in the survey, a self-selection bias appears to be the reason behind the high percentage of programs offering SHL courses. The results confirmed many of the findings in Beaudrie (2011). For example, existing HL programs target learners with higher levels of proficiency. HL learners with lower proficiency levels end up in L2 courses but these courses do not seem to provide an optimal context for HL learners since the book and curriculum adopted are still traditional and focus exclusively on L2 learners (Carreira, 2014). Moreover, the survey results showed limited course options for students, HL teaching in the hands of non-tenure faculty, insufficient training opportunities, inadequate placement tools, inadequate pedagogical materials, low enrollments, and low retention.

Two regional surveys provide more in-depth insights into what SHL course offerings look like. Valdés and colleagues (2006) conducted a statewide study in California of SHL programs in secondary and postsecondary institutions and a multiple case study of six institutions. The study inquired about language-placement exams, course objectives, effective instructional practices, and education of instructors, among other things. One of the most relevant findings for the present study was that the primary focus of a majority of SHL programs was to develop the students' competence in standard Spanish. Most individuals who participated in the study had unfavorable views about the Spanish spoken by Spanish speakers in the U.S. and had no knowledge of language variation or languages in contact. As the authors note, "the 'educated Spanish' of upper-class Spanish speaking monolinguals was seen as the ideal to which all students should aspire and the primary goal of heritage language instruction" (p. 233). The acquisition of 'standard Spanish' was considered instrumental in promoting an increase in the students' pride and self-esteem.

Beaudrie (2011) conducted another regional study that furthered our insights into the content of the SHL course. The study included four-year public and private universities in the Southwest offering Spanish courses and having at least 5% Hispanic enrollment. Out of the 173 universities

reviewed in the study, 66 (38%) had SHL programs. Furthermore, the study found a direct positive relationship between the availability of SHL programs and the size of the Hispanic populations in particular universities. The study also found that existing SHL programs addressed a limited range of instructional goals and only accommodated learners with a very specific profile. Most programs had a primary focus on improving students' literacy skills, primarily writing, ignoring other language skills and students' heritage cultures (Beaudrie, 2011). In addition, programs were geared to students who were around the midpoint of the bilingual continuum (see Valdés, 2001), frequently excluding students at the lower or upper ends of the bilingual range. Moreover, there was a lack of consistency among university programs regarding the level of courses and the terminology used to describe various proficiency levels. Terms such as *beginning*, *intermediate*, and *advanced* had program-specific meanings, and courses were arbitrarily placed in the first-, second-, or third-year curriculum.

In sum, SHL programs are growing rapidly in post-secondary institutions and SHL learners are provided with options to continue to develop their language competencies. The results of the above studies, however, also point to major challenges and obstacles that these programs are facing, which indicate that some programs may not be fully equipped to provide successful learning opportunities for all SHL learners. It is imperative to continue to investigate SHL programmatic and curricular practices in an effort to close a potential gap between SHL research and actual practice. To this effect, the present study seeks to bring to the foreground what is currently being offered to SHL learners and compare it with SHL research recommendations.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Analysis

In the fall of 2011, SHL syllabi from postsecondary SHL courses across the United States were collected by contacting Spanish faculty teaching at four-year public and private universities through email.² Given the method of data collection, it is assumed that all syllabi obtained were current at the time of data collection and the goals and objectives accurately reflected the focus of each course. A total of 62 syllabi for courses labeled for heritage learners, written in English or Spanish, were obtained from 35 universities located in 15 different U.S. states.³ Table 1 shows the distribution of syllabi by state with the corresponding number of institutions (see Appendix for the textbooks listed in the syllabi analyzed).⁴

Table 1.

Number of Syllabi per State

State	Institutions per state	Number of syllabi
Arizona	1	6
California	10	13
Connecticut	1	1
Florida	4	9
Georgia	1	1

Illinois	5	6
Massachusetts	2	2
Nevada	1	2
New Jersey	1	1
New Mexico	2	8
New York	1	1
Pennsylvania	2	2
Texas	2	7
Virginia	1	1
Washington, DC	1	2
Total	35	62

For the present study, course goals and objectives were identified from each individual syllabus. Content analysis procedures were employed to identify the presence of certain key phrases or concepts within the course syllabi, which were written in both English and Spanish. Content analysis is a research method defined as, “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti, p. 14). A key goal of the data analysis in this study was to determine the approach to language that each course adopted in their goals and objectives. To this effect, *a priori* coding was utilized so the categories were established prior to the analysis, based on SHL scholarship. Five different categories were created, reflecting traditional versus modern approaches to language in SHL instruction (see Table 2). In content analysis, the reliability of the coding is established by obtaining ‘intercoder reliability,’ also known as intercoder agreement (Tinsley & Weiss, 2000). Thus, for the analysis, two coders, both researchers and instructors in the SHL field, categorized all syllabi content independently and obtained frequency counts for each category. The inter-coder reliability, or the degree to which the two independent coders judged a certain characteristic and arrived at the same conclusion, was 77%. This level is considered acceptable in most situations (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). The two coders subsequently met to discuss differences in categorization, and they arrived at 100% agreement. The results of coding are reported both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Table 2.

SHL Instruction Categories and Descriptions

Traditional Approaches	
1. Eradication	There is a focus on teaching students features of standard Spanish while at the same time eliminating all non-prestige forms present in the students’ linguistic varieties.
2. Expansion Approach	There is a focus on developing the learners’ competence in Spanish by focusing exclusively on the standard or academic forms of the language. Although there is no explicit mention of substitution, learners’ varieties are not acknowledged nor do they appear to be valued.

Contemporary Approaches	
3. Appreciation Approach	This additive approach values language diversity and seeks to add the standard to the learners' linguistic repertoires. There is an emphasis on making students aware of dialectal differences in the Spanish language.
4. Appropriateness-based Approach	This additive approach seeks to add the standard to the learners' linguistic repertoires and teach learners about the appropriate context for use of each linguistic variety or register, so that they can modify their language use based on each specific situation.
5. Critical Approach	The focus is on making students' varieties central to SHL instruction and making students aware of the social and political functions of languages, and specifically of Spanish in the United States, in addition to teaching standard forms.

RESULTS

Based on the course objectives and goals, each of the 62 syllabi was examined for assignment to one of the five categories. Four syllabi did not list any course objectives so could not be placed in any of the categories. In addition, 11 syllabi contained no key words that justified assigning them to a particular category. In the end, 47 syllabi were assigned to one of the five categories (see Table 3).

Table 3.

Classifications for SHL Syllabi (N = 47)

Traditional Approaches	Erudication	2 (4.2%)
	Expansion	24 (51%)
	Total	26 (55%)
Contemporary Approaches	Appreciation	14 (30%)
	Appropriateness-based	6 (13%)
	Critical	1 (2%)
	Total	21 (45%)

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES

Erudication Approach

Within this category, two course syllabi were identified as having an approach that espouses an objective of eradication. These courses seek to help learners develop their Spanish competence and literacy while at the same time teaching them to identify and replace all English-influenced forms, as shown in examples 1 and 2.

1. "the study of grammar and spelling, as well as written and oral Spanish. Continue with the grammatical review ... (written accents, spelling, orthography, grammar, and errors that are made due to the influence of English)." (Syllabus 14)
2. "Improve learners' ability to read, listen, write and read in Spanish. ... Identify the English forms that intrude in the Spanish that is spoken in the United States and find ways to avoid them." (Syllabus 51)

By considering all instances of English influence as errors or forms to be avoided, examples 1 and 2 adhere to a "verbal deficiency theory" (Sánchez, 1981) that considers the learners' varieties to be imperfect, impure, and in need of correction. Although one can legitimately argue that academic writing calls for the use of monolingual forms of the language, it is problematic to label students' bilingual production as containing errors that need to be avoided. In this sense, both examples uphold a purist view of language that privileges monolingual speech and considers a bilingual variety of Spanish to be inferior. This belief is reinforced by the use of the word *improve* in the second example in reference to developing the learners' language abilities. The teacher's task is to teach grammar and spelling rules as a way to reinforce standard forms of Spanish. The fact that only 2 of 47 syllabi fit into this category makes it abundantly clear that eradicating students' linguistic varieties is no longer a major goal in SHL education.

Expansion Approach

The most common approach, represented in 24 syllabi (51%), is the expansion approach. These syllabi showed an exclusive focus on teaching students either standard or academic forms of oral or written Spanish, or both, thereby implicitly silencing the students' varieties as an object of study in the classroom, as exemplified in examples 3, 4, 5, and 6:

3. "be able to use standard Spanish in written and oral communication" (Syllabus 21)
4. "In this class, we will use a standard and academic register and formal writing will be practiced." (Syllabus 30)
5. "distinguish and apply formal registers of Spanish, in oral and written discourses, with an appropriate level of proficiency" (Syllabus 11)
6. "This course focuses on advanced grammar, academic registers, and vocabulary expansion." (Syllabus 19)

In all these examples, there is an exclusive focus on 'standard Spanish' and, therefore, they are implicitly silencing the students' varieties as an object of study in the classroom. Example 4 makes it clear that the accepted language of the classroom is only a standard and academic register. The failure to provide a space for students' varieties in course goals and objectives makes a clear statement that the expansion-oriented syllabi continue to adhere to an ideology that elevates the standard language above all other forms of language. By doing so, they ignore that students also need to develop local varieties and non-academic registers for personal, family, and community functions (Bernal-Enríquez & Hernández-Chávez, 2003; Correa, 2010; Martínez & Schwartz, 2012).

The deficiency perspective continues to be noted in the syllabi within this category. A recurrent theme is an emphasis on the need for SHL learners to 'improve' their overall Spanish or specific Spanish skills, as seen in Examples 7 and 8:

7. "This course is designed to help Spanish-speaking students to improve their level of Spanish. ... Improve grammatical correctness, punctuation, orthography and written Spanish" (Syllabus 9, my translation).

8. “To improve their knowledge of formal Spanish” (Syllabus 24, my translation).

Example 7 also highlights the prescriptive notion of ‘grammatical correctness’ as a way to reinforce standard forms, which are presented as ‘correct’ and ‘invariable’. The theme of grammatical correctness is present in several of the syllabi within this category, as seen in Examples 9, 10, and 11:

9. “the emphasis in this class is the teaching and practice of grammatical knowledge that is problematic to students who have acquired the language informally” (Syllabus 25, my translation)
10. “to further their command of grammatical structures, to improve their orthography, and to expand their vocabulary” (Syllabus 7)
11. “the correct command of Castilian Spanish spelling and grammar” (Syllabus 29, my translation)

It is also worth noting the perspective in Syllabus 9 that the learners’ grammatical knowledge is problematic due to their lack of exposure to formal schooling, which would have helped them acquire the grammatical norms of standard Spanish. In general, the majority of syllabi in this category present grammar instruction⁵ either as a main focus or as one of the foci of the course, as seen in Example 12:

12. “The course will cover grammatical issues that include parts of speech, written accent rules, spelling rules including homophones, and a detailed exposure to similarities and contrasts between English and Spanish—Cognates and false cognates.” (Syllabus 22, my translation)

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES

Appreciation of Linguistic Variation

The syllabi within this category all make explicit mention that one of the goals of the course is to make students aware of linguistic variation or to teach students to appreciate linguistic diversity. A total of 14 syllabi (30%) were categorized as following this approach. Some of the goals listed in the syllabi exemplifying the appreciation approach are shown in Examples 13, 14, and 15:

13. “Students will be introduced to the main linguistic varieties and cultural patterns of the Spanish speaking world with a special emphasis on the Spanish varieties and cultures in the US.” (Syllabus 1)
14. “Students will have access to other regional and discursive varieties of Spanish.” (Syllabus 12)
15. “Understand and appreciate linguistic diversity in the Spanish-speaking world” (Syllabus 6)

Syllabus 1 (Example 15) is unlike most of the syllabi in this category in that it mentions a focus on varieties of U.S. Spanish. Only 3 out of the 14 courses (21%) made reference to exposing students to U.S. varieties; the majority sought to expose students to varieties of Spanish spoken

in the global context outside the United States. Similarly, acknowledging the value of the variety that students bring to the classroom was mentioned in only five of the 14 syllabi (36%), as shown in examples 16 and 17:

16. “familiarize students with the norms of Spanish orthography without dismissing their own Spanish variety” (Syllabus 60)
17. “The Spanish you bring into the classroom is not viewed as a ‘bad’ dialect of Spanish, which is incorrect or must be eliminated, but rather is considered an extremely valid means of communication.” (Syllabus 41)

Although only 30% of the syllabi reflect this approach to language, it appears to be gaining popularity. In 1981, Valdés introduced this approach as an enlightened alternative that had as its main aim to reduce linguistic prejudice and at the time, it did not enjoy much support. Currently, it is the most popular approach after the expansion approach.

Appropriateness-based Approach

This approach is not very common in the syllabi analyzed. The six syllabi (13%) that were so categorized explicitly stated that learners would be taught to use the appropriate language forms based on context:

18. “Our goal is to develop the dialectal flexibility to have a good command of formal and informal varieties based on the context and situation.” (Syllabus 4, my translation)
19. “Be aware of dialectal differences in Spanish and attitudes towards different varieties. Develop dialectal flexibility in order to use formal and informal varieties according to different social contexts.” (Syllabus 49)

This approach seeks to add registers or varieties to students' linguistic repertoires while teaching them the accepted societal norms for when each one is appropriate to use. The final approach focuses on questioning those norms.

Critical Approach

This approach is the least common of all approaches and will be mentioned only briefly. It is represented in only one of the course descriptions, as shown in Example 20:

20. “Become aware of dialectal differences in Spanish and the social consequences of their use . . . develop the dialectal flexibility to use formal and informal varieties of the language according to context and their own choice.” (Syllabus 3)

The fundamental difference between this course description and previous ones is that it not only seeks to expose students to dialectal variation but also to make them aware of the social dynamics involved in language use. It promotes the learners' critical language awareness so that they can exert their own agency in choosing how to speak in different settings and social contexts. Martínez (2003) and Leeman (2005) have both called for an increased emphasis on the

sociopolitical importance of language use in SHL instruction, yet syllabi to date, as analyzed in the present study, do not reflect this perspective.

DISCUSSION

In 1981 Valdés and Sánchez decried the common practice in SHL education at that time of placing students in beginning Spanish courses so that they could ‘unlearn bad Spanish’ and replace it with standard forms of the language. The content analysis presented in this paper shows that the profession has successfully moved away from this traditional eradication model, which was widely criticized by SHL scholars (Porrás, 1997; Sánchez, 1981; Valdés, 1978; 1981; Villa, 1996; among others). The goal of replacing features of the students’ linguistic varieties with more prestigious forms is only minimally present in the syllabi examined and therefore appears no longer to be a goal in the postsecondary SHL courses under investigation.

The most common replacement for the early traditional approach is another long-standing approach, called here the expansion approach, which has as its main goal to teach students how to use standard Spanish and use forms appropriate to academic contexts. Although eradication of vernacular forms is no longer explicitly mentioned in the course descriptions, there is an exclusive focus on formal and academic registers and prestige varieties of the language. In this sense, the assertion made by Leeman and Martínez (2007) holds true for the syllabi analyzed in this study: “although the shift from eradication-oriented to expansion-oriented pedagogies on the surface appears to assign greater value to speakers’ home varieties, in many cases the subordination of such varieties to ‘standard’ Spanish has not been eliminated, but rather, it has simply been made less explicit” (Leeman & Martínez, 2007). This perspective is evident in the continued focus on teaching grammatical forms and reinforcing notions of correctness. It is further evident in the recurrent use of the word *improvement* to refer to the learners’ need to expand or further develop their Spanish language abilities.

Focusing exclusively on the acquisition of the standard and ignoring students’ native varieties is problematic for several reasons. First, and foremost, it gives unjustified importance to one goal of HL education, the acquisition of the standard, and downplays what should be the primary goal of this education; namely, HL maintenance. HL maintenance requires that we value, promote, and develop students’ linguistic varieties, their heritage languages, in addition to the standard. Second, focusing exclusively on the standard sends the message that it is the only form of language valued and worthy of study in the language classroom (Martínez, 2003). As Martínez notes, SHL learners begin their Spanish studies “with deep-seated emotional issues about their heritage language. They have been taught, and in many cases have internalized, a feeling of inferiority about their heritage language. Throughout their schooling experience of some twelve or thirteen years, they have been programmed with what Haugen refers to as ‘linguistic self-hate’ (1956).” The expansion approach adopted by the majority of SHL courses reviewed in this study only reinforces these feelings of inferiority by excluding vernacular varieties from the classroom and privileging foreign, monolingual ones. Third, it is a fallacy to assume that learners come to the classroom with an already-acquired variety and that our task is simply to show them the differences between what they already know and the features of the standard variety. A prominent line of research suggests that HL learners of all levels have gaps in their linguistic knowledge, attributable to their reduced exposure to the language (see Kagan & Dillon,

2001/2003; Montrul, 2008; Montrul, 2012, among others). The major problem with this line of research is that the linguistic gaps identified typically come from comparing HL linguistic competence to that of educated monolingual native speakers' (Rothman & Treffers-Daller, 2014), who may or may not share the same linguistic variety of the students. Although this type of research has the potential to inform SHL instruction, it should be interpreted with caution since it should not be our goal to 'fill linguistic gaps' with the ultimate aim of turning HL learners into educated monolingual speakers. Traditionally, "the goal of instruction has been to convert the swiss cheese into American cheese, standardized in form and without holes" (Hornberger & Wang, 2008, p. 22). Instead, the goal of SHL instruction should be to help learners become competent language users within their communities and elsewhere and have a wide range of linguistic repertoires at their disposal for effective communication. Students' performance may contain forms used by educated monolingual native speakers but may also contain forms used by Spanish-English bilingual speakers in the U.S. as well as others.

Instead, if the language classroom is to play a successful role in the students' language maintenance and development, it should align itself with the students' linguistic needs and experiences, as Bernal-Enríquez and Hernández-Chávez (2003) suggest. For this reason, recent SHL research has strongly recommended making the students' varieties central to SHL instruction for personal reasons (Beaudrie, 2006; Bernal-Enríquez, 2003; Correa, 2010; Leeman, 2005). It should help students develop their linguistic self-confidence in order to allow them to reconnect with their family and community and communicate successfully. It should also instill in students a feeling of pride about their HL use, so that they may promote and encourage it within their families and communities. Only by making students' varieties central to classroom instruction will we be able to accomplish this task. As Correa (2010) explains, students should be comfortable with and proud of using their HL, regardless of the context.

Finally, students' perspectives should also be considered in the present discussion of the treatment of language in the SHL classroom. In her study on students' perceptions, Ducar (2008) found that students' goals for language instruction are not always to develop the language for use in academic contexts. Instead, they frequently desire to learn the language for more practical and personal purposes, such as to communicate with their families and within their communities. These results mirror what was found in by Carreira and Kagan (2011) in their large-scale survey of HL learners. They surveyed over 1,700 college heritage learners of 22 different languages (84% living in California, 16% in other parts of the U.S.) The findings indicated that participants' reasons for studying their HL were primarily personal, rather than academic or professional. Expanding students' linguistic repertoires to allow them to function in contexts relevant to their reality should be a primary goal of SHL education. In this sense, the syllabi that focus exclusively on standard or academic Spanish may actually be jeopardizing rather than promoting HL maintenance.

This study found that the second most common approach in current SHL syllabi is the appreciation approach. This approach is an important step forward in equipping students with the sociolinguistic awareness to understand that language variation is natural and that all forms of language are equally valid. This is extremely important considering that the SHL learner population is extremely diverse in terms of both linguistic background and language proficiency

(Leeman, 2005). In order for Spanish to prosper in the United States, students need to be comfortable with and accepting of this diversity in their everyday language use (Bills, 2005). In this sense, this type of SHL classroom may have a positive influence on HL maintenance.

The syllabi in this category, however, tend to value Spanish varieties spoken in Latin America and Spain over U.S. varieties. Very few of the syllabi explicitly mentioned the goal of learning about Spanish in the United States. It appears then that monolingual varieties of Spanish from Hispanic countries are being valued over bilingual varieties, such as the students' home language. The lack of emphasis on U.S. Spanish varieties may be due in part to the fact that these varieties do not figure prominently in contemporary SHL textbooks. As Leeman and Martínez (2007) explain, textbooks written after the 1990s tend to privilege a view of Spanish as a world language and highlight a 'universal' variety of Spanish rather than local ones. It may be that the lack of explicit mention of U.S. varieties signals that these courses continue to privilege the standard as an object of study in the classroom and as the communication tool to be used in classroom assignments. As Leeman explains "stressing the legitimacy of regional differences does little to validate the varieties and practices common in multilingual contexts (e.g., code-switching and borrowing)" (Leeman, 2012, p. 50). This leaves the teacher responsible for finding and creating materials that feature local varieties and for welcoming and incorporating local varieties in students' assignments and activities.

The results of the syllabus analysis showed that two recent approaches, the appropriateness-based approach and the critical approach, have not received much support from SHL educators since they have not yet made their way into the SHL classroom. More generally, the results of this study showed that the treatment of sociolinguistic issues in the SHL classroom appears to be minimal. Early on, scholars such as Sánchez (1981) and Gutiérrez (1997) argued that teachers should be aware of sociolinguistic issues and that this should be a main component in the professional development of SHL teachers. The results of this study show a lack of sociolinguistically related goals and suggest that teachers may not possess the necessary sociolinguistic training to design SHL courses that are sensitive to the sociolinguistic needs of this education context. Due to the centrality of these issues, it is imperative that any SHL teacher have sufficient prior knowledge or experience to deal with the myriad and complex sociolinguistic issues that arise in the SHL classroom.

Assigning sociolinguistics a stronger role in the SHL curriculum would benefit SHL learners in several ways. It would address their low regard for their own variety of Spanish and provide them with a dialectal awareness that would potentially empower them to understand differences in language varieties and develop a renewed pride in their heritage language. It would give students an opportunity to learn about and accept dialectal differences among speakers of Spanish in the United States, especially if they are taught to recognize and value the characteristics of U.S. Spanish. It would also provide them with an understanding of issues of power and politics as they relate to language so that they could begin to question prevalent ideologies in the United States that affect them personally, such as the prevailing ideology of the standard language and the dominant ideology of English monolingualism (see Leeman, 2012). Students may then be able to question the subordination of Spanish to English and join the cause of promoting HL maintenance among speakers of Spanish and other heritage languages.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study set out to examine course goals and objectives in current SHL syllabi from postsecondary courses around the United States. Its main purpose was to examine the approach toward language and language variation that these courses have adopted as evidenced in the goals and objectives stated on their syllabi. The results corroborate prior research findings that the teaching of the standard continues to be a central goal in SHL education. It appears that, as Leeman (2012) has argued, SHL educators are still ascribing to the standard language ideology that legitimizes a monolingual, educated variety of Spanish. It follows that bilingual varieties still are not valued and that a foreign language is still being imposed on SHL learners. The results also suggest that SHL courses are slow to adopt sociolinguistically informed practices. Earlier eradication approaches have almost disappeared while appreciation approaches are gaining popularity. Other more recent approaches appear not to have made their way into the classroom to any great extent. These results must mobilize SHL researchers to narrow what seems to be a wide gap between existing research and practice. As Ellis (2009) recommends, when publishing research, scholars need to make greater efforts to provide clear and explicit pedagogical implications with concrete applications for classroom practice, to make research more accessible through teacher-friendly conferences and publications, to create more avenues for researcher-teacher collaboration and co-construction of knowledge, and to encourage teacher action research projects. The present analysis of the stated course goals and objectives of SHL syllabi has moved us a step closer to understanding current practices in the field. Future studies need to examine the treatment of language variation in actual classrooms through other methodologies such as classroom ethnographies and in-depth interviews. It is essential to explore further how approaches to language variation emerge in daily classroom practices and discourse, course assignments, and teacher feedback, among others. This exploration should not be limited to the SHL context but must be expanded to other heritage language contexts. It is only when we turn our eyes to the classroom that we can gauge true advances in HL education.

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APPENDIX

Textbooks Listed on Syllabi in Order of Frequency

Title of Textbook	Frequency
Marqués, S. (2009). <i>La lengua que heredamos: Curso de español para bilingües</i> (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.	8
Valdés, G., Teschner, R. V., & Enríquez, H.M. (2003). <i>Español escrito: Curso para hispanohablantes bilingües</i> (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.	6
Roca, A. (2012). <i>Nuevos Mundos: Lectura, cultura y comunicación. Curso para estudiantes bilingües</i> (3rd ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.	6
García, H. A., Carney, C. & Sandoval, T. (2011). <i>Nuestro idioma, nuestra herencia: Español para hispanohablantes</i> . New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.	4
Carreira, M., & Vinci, M. (2008). <i>¡Sí se puede!: Un curso transicional para hispanohablantes</i> . Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	4
Samaniego, F., Rodríguez, F. & Rojas, N. (2008). <i>De una vez: A college course for Spanish Speakers</i> (1st ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	3
Lyrantzis, D., & Zaslow, B. (2004). <i>Entre mundos: An integrated approach for the native speaker</i> (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.	3
Potowski, K. (2011). <i>Conversaciones escritas: Lectura y redacción en contexto</i> . Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.	3
Virgilio, C., Friedman, E., & Valdivieso, T. (2007). <i>Aproximaciones al estudio de la literatura hispánica</i> (6th ed.). London: McGraw Hill.	2
Francés, M. E., & Benítez, R. (2004). <i>Manual de gramática y ortografía para hispanos</i> (1st ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.	1
Colombi, M., Pellettieri, J., & Rodríguez, M. I. (2001). <i>Palabra abierta</i> (1st ed.). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	1
Teschner, R. (2000). <i>Camino oral: Fonética, fonología y práctica de los sonidos del español</i> . San Francisco, CA: McGraw Hill.	1
Gac-Artigas, P. (2010). <i>Hoja de ruta: Cultura y civilización de Latinoamérica</i> (5th ed.). Fairhaven, NJ: Academic Press-ENE.	1
Samaniego, F., Rojas, N., Rodriguez, F., & Alarcon, M. (2014). <i>El mundo 21 Hispano</i> (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Heinle/Cengage Learning.	1
Whitley, M., & González, L. (2007). <i>Gramática para la composición</i> (2a ed.). Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.	1
Garganigo, J. F., & Mullen, E. J. (2007). <i>El cuento hispánico: A Graded Literary Anthology</i> (7th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.**	1
Vega, S., & Salazar, C. (2001). <i>Avanzando: Gramática española y lectura</i> (5th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.	1
Bleichmar, P., & Cañón, P. (2012). <i>Taller de escritores: Grammar and Composition for Advanced Spanish</i> . Boston, MA: Vista Higher Learning.	1

Blake, E., & Stycos, M. (2004). <i>Voces hispanas, siglo XXI: Entrevistas con autores en DVD</i> . New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.	1
Jordan, I., & Pereiro-Otero, J. (2006). <i>Curso de gramática avanzada del español: Comunicación reflexiva</i> (1st ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice.*	1
Samaniego, F., Alarcón, F. X., & Sánchez, E. (1997). <i>Nuestro mundo: Segundo curso para hispanohablantes</i> . Lexington, MA; Washington, D.C. Heath.	1
Turner, J., Maisch, W., & Mendoza, H. (2004). <i>Somos vecinos: Intermediate Spanish through U.S. Latino culture</i> (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.	1
Valdés, G., Dvorak, T., & Hannum, T. (2008). <i>Composición: Proceso y síntesis</i> (5th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.	1
Briz, A. (2008). <i>Saber hablar</i> . Madrid: Instituto Cervantes-Aguilar.	1
Gill, M. M. V., Smalley, D. M., & Haro, M.-P. (2010). <i>Cinema for Spanish conversation</i> . Newburyport, MA: Focus Pub./R. Pullins Co.	1
Olivares, J. (1993). <i>Cuentos hispanos de los Estados Unidos</i> . Houston, TX: Arte Público Press.	1
Kendris, C., & Kendris, T. (2007). <i>501 Spanish verbs</i> . Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series.	1
Locally-created course packet	6
No books or materials listed	1
Total	64

*Used together with Blake, E., & Stycos, M. (2004).

**Used together with Whitley, M., & González, L. (2007).

NOTES

1. A language variety is defined by Hudson and Ferguson in terms of a specific set of ‘linguistic items’ or ‘human speech patterns’ (presumably, sounds, words, grammatical features, etc.) which we can uniquely associate with some external factor (presumably, a geographical area or a social group) (Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 23).
2. The list of SHL programs was obtained from a prior research study on SHL program offerings in postsecondary institutions with at least 5% Hispanic enrollment (Beaudrie, 2012).
3. Beaudrie (2012) found that four-year universities in a total of 26 states offer SHL courses.
4. An anonymous reviewer pointed out that it would be useful to know the proficiency level of the students the syllabi were intended for. As shown in Beaudrie (2011), labels such as beginning, intermediate, and advanced are used inconsistently to designate course levels and it is therefore misleading to use those terms to categorize proficiency levels intended for each course syllabus. Furthermore, academic year is not a good indication of course level since similar types of courses are found in first, second, and third year (Beaudrie, 2011). Current research, however, indicates that a majority of SHL courses target students with mid-range bilingual proficiencies (Beaudrie, 2011).
5. It is worth noting, however, that grammar is understood quite broadly in the syllabi, which appears to include other linguistic aspects such as spelling and lexicon.